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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001185

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W, USAID/W FOR AFR/AA, CONSTANCE NEWMAN,  
AFR/WA, MICHAEL KARBELING, GH/AA, ANN PETERSON, GH/CH  
SURVIVAL, HOPE SUKIN, OES/IHA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [SOCI](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: STATUS OF POLIO ERADICATION INITIATIVE  
(PEI)

REF: ABUJA 924

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SUMMARY  
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1. It is still anticipated that Kano will begin catch-up immunization programs this summer and rejoin the nationwide schedule when it resumes. It is less clear now, however, what the schedule will be or when it will begin. The Governor has now convened another panel to examine the latest test results brought forward by Dr. Bichi. Workers sent to the state from the National Program on Immunization (NPI) to prepare for resumption of PEI were sent home and told to cease their activities for the present. Solutions to the latest concerns are being sought by GON, Kano State and the donor community to enable resumption of PEI. WHO is beginning travel advisories to cover the entire north of Nigeria.

2. Post renews its request for 2 million USD in ESF to move this program forward; only substantial additional resources will allow USAID work in Kano State to go forward. Please see Embassy cable of July 6. END SUMMARY

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CURRENT ACTIVITIES  
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3. Polio Situation: There are now - as of June 23, 2004, 259 confirmed polio cases in 30 Nigerian states recorded since January 1, 2004. This accounts for 77 percent of the total global wild poliovirus case count and 85 percent of the cases in Africa since the beginning of 2004. As the virus enters the highest transmission period, post anticipates the Nigeria case count will increase significantly. The most recent country to be re-infected with poliovirus originating from Nigeria is Sudan, where a case has been identified in Darfur.

4. With the far-reaching and growing spread of this virus, the Director General of WHO has become personally involved in seeking solutions, resulting in phone conversations with the Governor of Kano State to offer support and convey concern of all UN Member States over the current status. While the governor was cordial and receptive, he declined to offer a firm date for resumption of PEI.

5. WHO will be obliged, if the current situation continues unabated, to impose a travel ban to cover the entire north of Nigeria, for obvious epidemiological reasons (85.7% of total cases in Nigeria are in the northern region). The ban will apply to both incoming and outgoing travelers.

6. USAID's Child Survival Project in Kano State flagged off Child Health Week on June 15 and ended the program a week later, on June 22. All routine antigens were available and administered to Kano children during the week, with the exception of oral polio vaccine (OPV). It was previously hoped that OPV could be reintroduced into Kano by this means (at fixed-post sites rather than door-to-door) to remove the onus that has gathered around the singular intervention of polio. Other child health components offered during the week were demonstrations of bed-net dipping, administration of vitamin A, nutrition demonstrations and counseling, and growth monitoring and promotion. The turnout during the week was large, with many residents inquiring about OPV and requesting it. A full report on Child Health Week will be available in July.

7. The GON is in close contact with the Governor of Kano State to find a solution to the recurrent stand-off. Donors are also in touch to offer assistance as needed and requested, although WHO declined a request by Kano State to fund further international testing of OPV. WHO responded by saying they see no need for further testing of vaccines from a certified and approved lab, and that sufficient testing had been done in the opinion of everyone else concerned. Dr. Lawan Bichi, a pharmacist who has been serving as the scientist for Kano State, has concluded more local testing of

available Indonesian vaccines and found them still to have unacceptably (to them) high levels of both estradiol and progesterone.

18. It seems clear that Dr. Bichi does not speak for either the Governor of the state or for the majority of state officials, since the Kano State Governor has now sidelined Dr. Bichi and appointed a committee of eight (8) men to review the latest, locally-produced laboratory report and make recommendations. Word on the decisions of this committee will be available during the week of July 5th. The latest testing came as a surprise to all concerned, since the Governor was making reassurances about and preparations for the resumption of PEI in Kano State. This has created a set-back, but sources in Kano tell us that at least five of the eight committee members are favorably inclined to the eradication initiative. Meantime, until all issues are sorted out and laid to rest officially, all PEI personnel who had been sent to Kano State to begin preparations were sent away and ordered to cease their activities for the present.

19. Donors continue to meet to craft a unified strategy that all can support. Heads of donor agencies met on Monday, July 5th, with the Minister of Health to spell out their concerns and to enlist his support for a new way forward with PEI. The Minister expressed his understanding of the major impediments to the PEI and asked for a collective donor position paper on immunization, to be submitted by the 26th of July with a follow-up meeting on the 29th to take decisions on a way forward. The paper and follow-up meeting will include approaches to polio eradication in Nigeria as well as a review of the NPI decree of 1997 determining the mandate of this body.

10. A joint proposal is due from WHO and UNICEF to USAID by July 12th. This proposal will fund the polio eradication activities detailed in the previous cable, dated May 28th 2004. USAID plans to begin operationalizing the activities in the proposal as soon as the requisite paperwork is concluded and ESF funds made available.

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USG COMMITMENT AND NEED FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES  
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11. USAID remains committed to devoting exclusive attention to Kano State for the duration of the present Child Survival contract with BASICS, which will terminate at the end of August 2004. Our proposed grants to WHO and UNICEF will allow us to continue our activities in Kano State with no gaps in service including both routine and polio immunization. It is our plan in the short term through this mechanism to facilitate the reinstatement of PEI in the state, and in the long term to continue immunization efforts through the newly approved USAID social service delivery project.

12. Post reiterates its request for \$2 million USD in ESF to support proposed activities in Kano State for both short- and long-term assistance.

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NEXT STEPS  
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13. Post will continue to provide regular reports on progress in the effort to eradicate polio in Nigeria.  
CAMPBELL